

NOTES FROM THE UNDERGROUND

Ottawa, Canada

September/October

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Charting A Course

On Sunday August 12th, our group held a meeting in which we discussed a number of subjects which concern us as a group and as a community. Present were Leigh, Joanne, Rachel, Sharon, Belinda, Natalie, Alison, my niece Jeanne, who was good enough to take the minutes, and me, Niki.

We met at 7 PM and after some chit chat while we awaited everyone's arrival, we began discussing our putting out a brochure or pamphlet to the general public. The aims of this pamphlet would be to dispel myths about crossdressing and transsexualism, and to give facts regarding our particular subculture. Belinda put

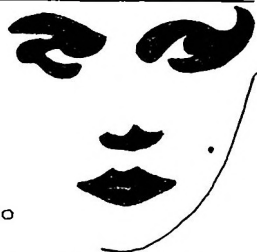
it quite succinctly when she remarked that we wanted to explain exactly who we were and who we were not. We need to let people know our group exists and that we're available to them.

We also discussed the feasibility of getting a phone line so that others could contact us easily. Since the phone would have to be in a private home, we agreed that an answering machine message and a call forward feature, so that the task would be shared among members, would be desirable.

If we do proceed with this idea, we'll need to get info on guidelines for phone counselling from Tri-Ess perhaps, or locally (GO Ottawa maybe, or one of the crisis or help lines). We also mentioned trying to get a list of professionals (doctors, psychiatrists, etc.) who could act as resource people, not only for the phone line but also for the pamphlet. We decided to keep the group non-profit (sic) to enable us to qualify for government funding.

We also did a little brainstorming and reached a consensus on a new name. We hope this meets with the approval of the complete membership.

The optimum meeting date would be the second Sunday of every month, but again we would like the input of the full group since each project that is discussed affects everyone. We're trying to make the second meeting substantially different from the first, but there is no division within the group itself.



Notes from the Underground
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Printed by New Ottawa Women, a non-sexual support group for crossdressers. Subscriptions 7 dollars per year. Interested persons are invited to write us at the above address.

An accredited chapter of the Society for the Second Self under the name Nu Omicron Phi.



"Great spirits have always encountered violent opposition from mediocre minds."

Albert Einstein

Continued from page one

A few members offered to lay the groundwork for various projects. Sharon, who initiated the pamphlet idea, will continue to expand on it and refine it and submit it for input and eventually for final ratification. Leigh offered to look into beginning an electronic (computer) bulletin board that could be accessed by persons interested in our subculture and Joanne will look into the costs and options of telephone installation.

Finally we broached the subject of media interest and access, and making members available to schools and other groups in order to reach a greater public. In this regard, Natalie suggested we create guidelines and a presentation on our aims and realities.

The next meeting was tentatively set for the second Sunday of September. Please let us know (myself or Alison or Judy) if this is not a good time for you. Also, would it be possible to rotate the meetings so no one feels put upon constantly?

On the subject of accomodation, we revived an idea that's been floating around for some time. It was suggested that we see about getting space in a community centre or church basement or whatever for meetings. Any ideas or offers to do this?

Many things were discussed and this is just a synopsis of all that was said. I would personally like to thank all those that were in attendance as everyone contributed greatly in refining and defining our

goals. If you couldn't make the first meeting, we hope you'll attend the next one as we need your ideas and opinions. You matter as much as any member and the more members participate, the stronger the group will be. In any case, regardless of whether or not you can attend, we do need your ideas. I think an incredible beginning was effected and it can only continue and progress if attendance is high and if every member follows up on doing just one thing.

I am pursuing the grant/funding aspect and as soon as I receive the government package outlining the steps we need to take, I will bring it to your attention so that we can get those desperately needed megabucks. If any of you have experience or knowledge about applying for funding, please let me know.

In closing, we've begun the 10,000 step journey, as it were, so let us share the burdens of that road and help one another make it to the end; maybe a bit battered and exhausted, but certainly wiser and more whole.

Niki Avon

Thank You

To everyone who participated in our recent photo session. It was fun, wasn't it? Particularly, when the tour bus drove up and dumped its cargo of Japanese tourists in our midst. Won't they have some interesting stories to tell about their trip to Ottawa? So, what do you say, Parliament Hill next time?

Alison

A Letter to TV Ontario

Dear Sir or Madam,

Some weeks ago, I sat down with my Saturday morning coffee, turned on the television and stumbled across your kid's program "How Do You Do?". What I saw annoyed me a great deal, and as my irritation does not seem to be diminishing, I am finally sitting down to air my objections.

The episode that I found offensive was the one relating to clothes. The female host was explaining what she was wearing to the show's resident robot, who was male and the character with which the kids were obviously meant to sympathize. After she had finished, the robot announced that he too would like to wear a blouse, skirt and stockings, whereupon the woman laughed and told him that men wore shirts, pants and socks. She conveniently ignored the fact that women wear shirts, pants and socks also, because if she had mentioned it the double standard would have been obvious. Kids are not dummies. So rather than try to explain it, the writers just pretended it didn't exist. Indeed, the show made a point of emphasizing the approved clothing for boys and used humiliation as its tool for conformity. I'm not suggesting that kids should learn about crossdressing - it's worth noting besides that in some cultures, men do indeed wear skirts - but it seemed to me that in your drive for conformity, you were simply perpetuating intolerance.

While I was contemplating your reluctance to deal with this issue intelligently, the scene shifted to a men's wear store where an appalling stereotype of a gay male - the sales clerk - was berating the poor robot for his ignorance in clothes. The sales clerk was a thoroughly disagreeable character, and since the kids are obviously meant to identify with the robot, I'm aghast at the implications of what you were saying.

I doubt if this episode was meant to be malicious, but I find it incredible that no one involved with the production of "How Do You Do?" had the sensitivity or social awareness to be troubled by the negative messages they were sending.

If you're going to do something, you should at least attempt to do it right. With a little imagination and, more important, some serious thought this topic could have been presented in an intelligent and comprehensive way. Instead, you appear to have deliberately aimed low. You may have hit your target, but it was no great accomplishment.

Yours truly,

Alison Terry

Origins

Getting a group going isn't easy, but it can be done. The first problem is, how do I contact the sisters out there? Here's the answer: you can't. You don't know them, but you can do what I did and let them find you. The only way to put this in place is through a common contact point. I used the Ottawa Gay Line. I called them and asked where they would reference a heterosexual male crossdresser. They were stumped, so after 15 or 20 seconds I said they could reference them to me.

We setup a meeting for the next Saturday. I went to the GO Center and met the counsellors. I did a small presentation on the Tri-Ess organization with copies of the literature I had received from Tri-Ess and pictures of myself at Kennedy Space Center and Jenny of Orlando, Florida.

The response was great. They all thought it was just fine. I even dated one of the counsellors once (a girl, of course).

The going was slow at first, but I stayed with it and our happy group is the result. After a time and much effort, I convinced the Ottawa Distress Center to use us as a resource.

The rewards I have received from being a part of the group are without equal, and I will always be thankful to each and every one of you. I must say that everything is possible if you try and trying is always possible.

Judy

Mont Cascade Corn Roast And BBQ

Location: At a private house in Mont Cascades ski resort village. We have lots of trees, sand and dirt roads. Country living at its best!

Date: Saturday, Septmber 29th, 1990 at 2:30, or whenever you can make it.

I hope to see everybody there. Spouses and friends most welcome.

Your hostess will have lots of food and drink so come hungry.

Dress for the weather. It can be a few degrees cooler in the mountains. Be comfortable. Formal wear prohibited.



All other info will be handed out at our next meeting Sept. 1st. If you are on our local mailing list, a copy of the map

and general information will be included.

I hope to see you there!

Joanne

Brains and Bras

The U.S. branch of Mensa, an organization for people more intelligent than 98 per cent of the population, held its annual convention in Los Angeles in June, a meeting to allow minds of the same lofty level to socialize.

One of the featured speakers was Audrey Wegner, known as the "bra lady". She has been a hit at previous gatherings of the brainy folk. Ms. Wegner, a director of a bra and lingerie shop in California, puts on demonstrations relating to her work. "I have dancers who bounce up and down and show how a properly fitted bra gives more support than an off-the-rack bra," she says, attributing the popularity of her presentation to the fact people are curious how she can talk for 45 minutes on one subject. "And Mensans are interested in the aerodynamics of the bra."

World Watch



Crossdressing Ken

A crossdressing Ken doll was nabbed wearing Barbie's duds in a Tampa Florida toy store. Shoppers Carina Guillot and daughter Jocelyn 12, were shocked to find a boxed "My First Ken" doll sporting a purple top and lace apron over a turquoise and purple skirt. Donna Gibbs of Mattel had no idea how Ken got into Barbie's garb. "I guess it slipped through the inspectors," she said. Subsequent investigation by Mattel nabbed the perpetrator, who said he had merely been easing the boredom of the evening shift. He was fired.

Androgynous Managers

A major study of 455 employees showed that managers who are perceived by subordinates to be effective have androgynous characteristics - a blend of male and female qualities. In fact, they have a high level of both masculine and feminine skills. Conversely, strongly sex-typed managers seem to have limited success as managers. Findings showed that increasing the number of these managers may decrease employee turnover. Feminine qualities were defined as anything from sensitivity to employee needs to alliance building, while masculine qualities covered such things as dominance and possessing a willingness to take risks.

Good Service

Penaco Hosiery in the U.S. now offers a toll-free hosiery hotline. It offers overnight delivery of hosiery, aimed at business travellers who get runs in their stockings.

THE BACK PAGE

In the spring, I contacted a number of crossdressing groups in Canada with the idea of setting up an informal information exchange. It's always been a source of frustration for me that most of the information in this country travels north-south and that we don't often hear what's happening in Canada.

I'm pleased to say that all the groups I wrote to responded positively, and though there are currently only four organizations involved, I feel personally like I've made many friends across the country already. From west to east the groups are:

The Cornbury Society
Box 3745
Vancouver, B.C.
V6B 3Z1

Phi Sigma - Tri-Ess
Box 803
6808 Ogden Road S.E.
Calgary, AB
T2C 1B4

Monarch Social Club
Box 682
Owen Sound, Ont.
N4K 5R4

We, of course, are number four. Audrey of Phi Sigma recently informed me of another group in the Calgary area called Illusions, which I've taken the liberty of forwarding a newsletter to. (Hmm. Sounds like a hotbed of crossdressing in Calgary. Must be the Chinooks.)

Everyone involved has extended their hospitality to us when we travel, and it's our pleasure to return the favour should any members of our sister organizations visit Ottawa.

Someday we must organize the biggest crossdressing convention/celebration this country has ever seen. How about Winnipeg 1992?

Alison